

Remarks by Leah Knott, Member of Mayoral Committee (MMC) for Group Corporate and Shared Services

As the MMC for Group Corporate and Shared Services (GCSS), I oversee what one could describe as the 'engine room' of the City of Johannesburg.

Being such a large Department with a swathe of responsibilities, we had to identify the problems and act on them quickly, because a broken Department of Group Corporate and Shared Services means a poorly performing City.

But we made headway in a number of spaces in the short period we were in Office.

Tens of millions was owed to hospitals and doctors for almost a decade for the treatment of City of Joburg employees, who were injured on the job, mostly on the front line such as police officers or essential service employees. When we came into government, it was to a final ultimatum from hospitals that their doors were closed to City employees until the issues were resolved.

We managed to settle all debt owed between March and June 2022.

A critical function of GCSS is human resources, therefore in order to repair and rebuild the City, we needed to ensure that critical vacancies were filled by capable women and men.

For example, there has been a vacancy in the City Manager position for over a year, and vacancies in 5 Heads of Department, some had vacancies spanning 2 plus years, resulting in the City and its Departments having no full-time, consistent leadership.

Some notable appointments and progress had been made:

- ED Development Planning – appointed July 2022
- Group Head GSPCR – appointed August 2022
- ED GCSS – interviews completed & vetting done – pending Council approval
- ED Economic Development – shortlisting completed
- Group Head Governance – interviews done – awaiting vetting & competency assessments
- City Manager – interviews done – awaiting vetting & competency assessments
- Group CFO – advertised (there was no job description for this role so it had to be crafted)
- Group Head Group Communications – advertised
- ED Health – advertised (JD had to be redone)
- Chief of Police – interviews done – awaiting vetting & competency (non S56 but CRITICAL)

GCSS was critical in managing the matter of political employees who had been made permanent at an additional cost to the City of over R86 million. These employees were placed in an excess pool, earning while sitting at home. It was also done in contradiction to a directive from COGTA stating that political appointments were fixed to the term of their political principal.

We reversed this decision and corrected the talent acquisition policy in line with COGTA's directive.

In this matter we were taken to the Labour Court 7 times and to the Bargaining Council once in an attempt to restore the status quo, however all attempts were unsuccessful.

What was astonishing was that the City's critical service delivery Departments and Entities were not operating 100% personnel capacity despite lockdown restrictions being lifted, resulting in severely reduced service delivery. JRA as an example was operating at 10% of its total capacity which ultimately led to the breakdown in critical service delivery issues such as pothole repairs over the COVID period.

We therefore implemented a 100% from 1 April 2022, and no hybrid working options are permitted for essential service departments.

A hybrid working policy was drafted and approved by Council for those employees who are able to work remotely. This policy allowed for capacitation of staff outside the workplace so they had tools of trade to continue remote working.

When we say the ANC is corrupt, we're not just politicking, we are stating facts. For example poor and corrupt contract management was costing the City billions – all City core contracts had expired and the ANC had failed to start the renewal process on any of them some dating as far back as early 2020. This included contracts like photo copier machines, fleets for entities and departments (eg: fire engines), cell phone contracts for employees, the travel desk. In fact, the ANC redirected R200 million intended for fire engines in 2020 to political staff remuneration costs, as they had increased the structure, which is why we had to budget for this in the current financial year.

Members of the media, critical service employees such as building inspectors, environmental health officers, public safety officers, emergency services and the like, who must travel in order to do their jobs were being paid locomotion allowances based on 1999 AA rates. This meant these officials were only getting out on the ground once a week or once every 2 weeks, which explained the slow resolution of service delivery complaints and mushrooming of illegal activity. Despite the ANC govt promising updated allowances, they never provided the budget and basically lied to Unions and City employees about having prioritised this for the adjustment budget in Jan/ Feb 2022. While Cllr Masuku at the time passed off a signed Maycom report as proof of this, it was never going to materialise as Finance had never approved budget for it and Council had never heard of it, it was thus never in the pipeline. In essence they prioritised increasing politician's support staff and converting them to permanent above equipping staff who were responsible for service delivery in the City. In the current budget we allocated R69 million to adjust loco allowances for staff. This was being done in 2 phases with critical staff in Phase 1 during the current financial year and the balance in Phase 2 either during adjustment budget or the new financial year.

Anti-corruption measures like lifestyle audits were not in place.

In August 2022 we committed to developing an implementation plan for lifestyle audits as part of our commitment to fighting corruption. This would see lifestyle audits of not only senior officials but also Councillors being undertaken within the current financial year.

Under the ANC, this is not going to happen.